

Coltrane Screenplay Project

John Frain

Based on *Spirit Catcher*

By

John Frain

johnfrain@mac.com
www.greathousestories.com

“The closest contemporary analogy to Coltrane’s relentless search for possibilities was the Beatles' redefinition of rock from one album to the next. Yet the distance they traveled from conventional hard rock through sitars and Baroque obligatos to *Sergeant Pepper* psychedelia and the musical shards of *Abbey Road* seems short by comparison with Coltrane's journey from hard-bop saxist to daring harmonic and modal improviser to dying prophet speaking in tongues.”

“What Coltrane Wanted”

The Atlantic

December 1987

Edward Strickland

“Nobody in jazz has traveled further and more effectively, in a chartable, linear sense, during such a short period, than Coltrane.”

Ben Ratliff

The Story of a Sound

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Chronological Outline

1943

When 17-year old John Coltrane moved to Philadelphia, in 1943 the nation's third largest city, he entered a fundamentally different world from his hometown of High Point, N.C. he was born at on September 23. 1926.

Like many African-Americans who migrated to major cities of the North, Coltrane joined older family members and friends already settled in the city. They lived in an apartment at 1450 N. 12th Street between Jefferson and Master Streets in an area since demolished for the Yorktown Urban Renewal project.

What Coltrane, already a studious musician even in high school, encountered here was a vibrant and intense nightlife scene almost completely centered on live jazz. Trane entrenched himself among a large group of highly skilled musicians and took advantage of the affordable, serious musical education available, all of which would have been inconceivable in the small town Jim Crow South. According to saxophonist Odean Pope, Philadelphia was the "institution" that fostered great talents like Coltrane, pianist McCoy Tyner, saxophonist Jimmy Heath, organist Jimmy Smith, trumpeter Lee Morgan, drummer Philly Joe Jones, saxophonist Benny Golson, bassist Reggie Workman, and Pope himself.

Pope makes the case that with New York relying on talent from other cities but not entirely fostering its own brand of jazz, Philly was the greatest jazz scene in the United States between World War II and the mid-1960s. New York, headquarters of the top labels and largest venues, was where you went when you made it big. Instead, Philadelphia was the proving ground for jazz artists, and its working-class people fostered the talent by packing rooms every week from Tuesday to Saturday nights. The sheer number of clubs, musicians' culture of sharing, strong instruction available at both the Ornstein School of Music, located at 19th and Spruce Streets, and the Granoff Studios, located at 2118 Spruce Street, and the discipline and practice regimen of key musicians in the scene, gave young men like Coltrane a true Philly jazz education.

"There was no end to the music," says Pope, who would regularly practice with Coltrane and pianist Hasaan Ibn Ali, a Philly legend who Pope claims was the most advanced player to ever develop in the city. Pope lived on Colorado Street in North Philly, near Hasaan's residence on Gratz Street. Together, they'd walk the few blocks to Trane's house on N. 33rd Street, once the saxophonist took up residence there in 1952, and have long

jam sessions, trading ideas, practicing scales and showing each other the harmonic possibilities of their instruments. Hasaan's ideas were very advanced and Trane "practiced, practiced, practiced." Unfortunately, there is only one recording session available featuring Hasaan Ibn Ali: "The Max Roach Trio Featuring the Legendary Hasaan," from 1964 on Atlantic.

Pope argues that it's possible to draw a direct line from the technique that Hasaan taught Trane to the harmony Trane developed later on tunes like "Giant Steps." "Hasaan was the clue to all of that, to the system that Trane uses. Hasaan was the great influence on Trane's melodic concept," he says.

At the Granoff Studios, Coltrane studied under music theorist Dennis Sandole, who is credited with providing Coltrane with the thorough knowledge of the theory and philosophy of the complicated rhythmic, harmonic and melodic structures necessary to create, compose and play his highly sophisticated brand of jazz.

However, the best jazz "institution" of the era was the Woodbine Club, located at 12th and Master Streets in North Philadelphia, for it was here that jazz musicians would gather at 2AM when their gigs ended. "During that period people like Jimmy Oliver, Jimmy Heath, Red Garland, Shuggie Rose, Philly Joe Jones, those were the pioneer musicians during that period. And it was a place, an after hours place where they had entertainment, say from say twelve o'clock until around five in the morning. That was like Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. It was a sort of collaboration place where all of the musicians would come and exchange ideas and jobs. So this particular night it was Hassan Ibn Ali, Donald Bailey – some very fine percussion. They had sort of invited me along to go with them. And Trane, Jimmy Oliver, Jimmy Heath, Wilbur Cameron, Bill Barron, all of the musicians came there after they got off work and that was the most enlightened experience in my whole life, I think, of seeing so many wonderful musicians come together collectively and exchange ideas as well as perform." During these sessions, says Pope, musicians learned new ideas and showed younger players techniques that would then be incorporated back into the repertoires and sounds coming out of Philly, all adding to the vibrancy of the institution in this most musical of cities.

Playing consistently, night after night, in clubs allowed Trane and others to develop their unique sound. By the time he left Philadelphia for New York in 1958, "all of the information he had acquired in Philadelphia gave him the opportunity to open up all his ideas and concepts," says Pope. This knowledge was based not just on touring regularly with Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis and other major jazz greats, but also in the uniqueness of the tight knit scene developing here and the way Trane would share his ideas with other musicians he knew and trusted in Philadelphia, gathering insight into his own methods in the process.

Rob Armstrong

“John Coltrane: There Was No End To The Music”

All About Jazz

2/8/2013

1944

At the age of 18, Coltrane starts playing in Philadelphia clubs. He worked with big bands at dances or in a trio at nightclubs. The big club was the Woodbine Club on 12th & Master where Coltrane would jam. He would also work along Columbia Avenue (now Cecil B. Moore Avenue) that had clubs on nearly every block. The 820 Club was at 8th and Columbia, Café Society on Columbia between 12th and 13th Streets, and further west, the Crystal Ball on Columbia between 15th and 16th Streets, the Web Bar on Columbia between 16th and 17th Streets, and The Northwestern and The Point on 23rd and Columbia. Nearby was Café Holiday at 13th and Diamond, the Sun Ray at 16th and Susquehanna and North Philly’s largest nightclub in the 1950s, the Blue Note, at 15th Street and Ridge Avenue.

1945

Coltrane sees Charlie Parker perform for the first time on June 5 in Dizzy Gillespie’s group. He was with his friends Benny Golson and Jimmy Heath. Golson remembered, “John just sat there, taking it all in. All over the hall, people were standing up and shouting, clapping their hands and stamping their feet.” (Ben Ratliff, *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound*). Following the performance, Coltrane and Golson accompanied Parker to the Blue Note club where Parker had an evening performance.

1946

On July 13, 1946, seaman second class John Coltrane recorded eight songs with four other musicians drawn from the ranks of the Melody Makers, a large navy band stationed in Oahu, Hawaii. The band was segregated and the Melody Makers was all white. Coltrane was almost 20 when the Melody Makers invited Coltrane to jam with them. With Coltrane as a guest, escaping the knowledge of their superior officers, they made a private recording, eventually pressing four copies of a 78 RPM record. (Ben Ratliff, *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound*). On the tune “Hot House” Coltrane takes the only solo.

Coltrane moved back to Philadelphia after being discharged from the navy in August.

Studied at Granoff School of Music in Philadelphia when he returned from Navy. His teacher was Dennis Sandole, a swing-band guitar player who focused on scales, using exotic ones.

At this time, big bands beginning to disappear and small groups starting up. Solos were becoming more important.

Coltrane was always practicing. His friend Jimmy Heath recalls, “He’d be in his shorts, we didn’t have any air-conditioning in those hot tenement houses; he lived with his mother. He’d be practicing, sweating, man. Practicing all day. Nobody practiced that music at that time that I knew. He was practicing all the things he eventually perfected. Lines, harmonic concepts that we were learning together, things we had transcribed.” Heath recalls Coltrane practicing so hard that he made his reeds red with blood. (Ratliff book)

1947

Coltrane meets Charlie Parker for the second time in Los Angeles while he was on tour with King Kolax.

1948

In November of 1948, Coltrane switched to the tenor saxophone, when he joined the band of Eddie Vinson. The change enabled Coltrane to move beyond the influence of Charlie Parker since, as he described it, “a wider area of listening opened up for me.”

1949

Trane joins Gillespie in the fall of 1949. Heard with Dizzy Gillespie on *Dizzie Gillespie And His Orchestra*. Played with Dizzy from 1949 to 1951.

1950

Coltrane plays cheap clubs like Café Society, Joe Pitt’s Musical Bar and the Zanzibar in Philadelphia. Musicians were expected to entertain and Coltrane made unusual “honking” sounds with his horn.

1951

Trane in *Dizzy Gillespie Sextet*. Coltrane's first recorded solo can be heard on Gillespie’s “We Love to Boogie” (1951).

1952

Joins Earl Bostic, the master technician. Art Blakey once said “Working with Bostic is like attending a university of the saxophone.” Coltrane learned fingering techniques from Bostic.

1953

Joins Johnny Hodges, the master stylist. Hodges had been the idol of Trane when he was growing up and was the major sax stylist before Parker. Style of stretching, lingering over and caressing notes was the antithesis of the quick, jabbing style of Parker. Helped create the lyricism of Trane's later music.

1954

Coltrane's problem with alcohol and heroin gets worse. Hodge's bassist John Williams recalls, "Coltrane would be sitting in his chair, holding his horn but not moving his fingers, the sax still in his mouth but not playing." On tour in LA, Hodges was forced to let Trane go.

Trane moves back to Philly. Perhaps the most difficult time in his life. He meets Naima (Jaunita Austin) at party of fellow musician and friend Steve Davis. She is a Moslem and mother of a fatherless five-year-old daughter named Syeeda. The two have much in common. Naima comes from a musical family and is very involved in music. Her brothers are Earl and Carl Grubbs. During her childhood she was exposed to the music of Bartok and is involved in astrology. She proves to be a tremendously positive influence on Trane helping him pull-out of the tailspin of drugs and alcohol that was enveloping his life. Naima, introduced her husband to the ideas of Sufi Islam, which helped him battle and ultimately overcome his addiction to heroin.

1955

Coltrane began working the Philadelphia club scene with lesser-known musicians such as Shirley Scott and conga player Bill Carney and in a depressed state about his music. Then, he got a two-week gig with organist Jimmy Smith at a club called Spider Kelly's and started feeling excited about his music again. Smith asked Trane to join him on a permanent basis. His life seemed to be turning to the better for him.

Then, drummer Philly Joe Jones called and told Trane that Miles Davis was forming a new group and wanted Coltrane to join it. After discussing it with Naima, he joined them on their first date together in Baltimore. The music fused beautifully on the opening night. A few days later, Trane and Naima were married.

Davis was the rising star of the avant-garde "cool" movement in jazz and Trane one of the leaders of hard bop. Davis was having a comeback after playing a mesmerizing performance at the Newport Jazz Festival. It was almost like the meeting of two different schools that jazz was going in at this point in time. Bop and cool. Represented by Coltrane and Davis. Both were artistic rebels, though, and had drug problems. Davis had kicked the habit in 1954 but Trane was still a junkie. They created a rarefied musical

atmosphere together. Nothing was really planned in advance and there was little rigid format in the band.

Coltrane began to develop a distinct style with Davis. Yet, it was a tentative one. As Martin Williams notes in *The Jazz Tradition*, “He seemed more interested in discovery than in making finished statements, as though for the time being he was occupied with turning up a vocabulary with which future sentences, paragraphs, and essays might be built.”

Trane was more concerned with catching the scene in sweeping brush strokes than starting a new sketch. When ideas are pursued they often lead into a thick undergrowth of unexplored territory and come to a halt in a fumble of notes, an incoherent babbling. However, there was an incredible speed and intensity of arriving at these halting destinations. Never had anyone run the scales on a sax like Trane was running them. Some critics speculated that he was attempting to further divide jazz rhythm from the 8th notes of bop to a new idiom of 16th notes. This time came to be known as Trane’s “sheets of sound” period by jazz critic Ira Gitler. Not all critics liked this period and Nat Hentoff said there was little Coltrane in all these experiments.

Miles Davis was very pleased with the music they were playing. “We had Trane on sax, Philly Joe on drums, Red Garland on piano, Paul Chambers on bass and myself on trumpet. And faster than I could have imagined, the music that we were playing together was just unbelievable. It was so bad that it used to send chills through me at night, and it did the same thing to audiences, too.” (Miles Davis, *Miles The Autobiography*).

Charlie Parker dies.

1956

Davis band having some problems and Trane having problems with the total unpredictability of Davis. He was appearing as sideman in addition to his work with Davis. Worked with Tadd Dameron on *Mating Call* and with Sonny Rollins on *Tenor Madness* and with Paul Chambers, Hank Mobley and Zoot Sims on *Tenor Conclave*. Yet, Trane was still not getting the recognition he felt warranted and felt discouraged with his music. Trane and Naima moved to NYC and lived in cheap places like the Marie Antoinette. He hung around the musician’s union and picked up various gigs. A friend got him into using drugs again. He wanted to quit music altogether and one day walked into a post office and filled out an application to be a postman. In November of 1956, he abruptly left Davis and returned to Philadelphia where he and Naima lived in his mother’s home. He worked less and less while using drugs more and more.

1957

In the spring of the year, Trane awoke one morning in and announced to Naima and his mother that he wanted to stop using drugs. He then retreated to his room to battle with the pain of withdrawal. He lived just on water and spent the days praying. His thoughts were jumbled when he talked with Naima. A number of days later, he walked out and announced he was no longer addicted to drugs or alcohol. There was a look of tranquility on his face. He told Naima that he had a dream where he heard a droning sound. He tried to play it on the piano but couldn't. This began his search for that mysterious sound.

The importance of this event in his life was never forgotten. On the liner notes to his 1964 album *A Love Supreme* Coltrane says:

“In the year of 1957, I experienced, by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening, which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life. At that time, in gratitude, I humbly asked to be given the means and privilege to make others happy through music. I feel this has been granted through his grace.”

In late Spring of 1957, Trane and Thelonius Monk meet at apartment of the wealthy patron of Monk's music, Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, daughter of Nathaniel Rothschild. During the evening, Trane played “Monk's Mood” and Monk liked it so well he asked Trane to join him at his upcoming engagement at the Five Spot in NYC.

The engagement at the Five Spot (from July through end of 1957) would become one of the most important dates in the history of jazz. The quartet consisted of Ahmed Abdul-Malik on bass, Roy Haynes on drums, Monk on piano and Trane on Sax. The April date at the Five Spot was captured on record as *Discovery*. Nat Hentoff, perhaps the biggest critic of Trane at the time, was finally converted into a Coltrane follower at the Five Spot. Hentoff was there almost every night and writes, “The excitement was so heady that soon musicians were standing two and three deep at the bar of the Five Spot nearly every night.”

More than anything else, Monk taught Trane the use of space, those important intervals between notes and chords. It offered a strong juxtaposition to his earlier “sheets of sound” period with Miles Davis. Often, Monk would leave the bandstand and wander into the kitchen and begin talking with the dishwasher. Coltrane and the group were left on the bandstand to fend for themselves. Trane would later say in a 1960 interview in *Downbeat*, “Working with Monk is like falling down a dark elevator shaft.”

Trane came to view Monk as a replacement for his father. He was the greatest teacher he had ever encountered. Trane became interested in the harp and studied it for months.

In a 1960 interview in *Downbeat* Coltrane said, “Working with Monk brought me close to a musical architect of the highest order. I felt I learned from him in every way--through the senses, theoretically, technically. I would talk to Monk about musical problems, and

he would sit at the piano and show me the answers just by playing them. I could watch him play and find out the things I wanted to know. Also, I could see a lot of things that I didn't know about at all.”

Trane's first work as a leader rather than a sideman. His first album as a leader was *The First Trane*, reissued as *More Lasting Than Bronze*. Two albums from the latter part of 1957 were *Traneing In* and *Wheelin' and Dealin'* show Trane beginning to flex some of his musical muscle. Most important from this period was *Blue Trane*. Towards the end of the year, Trane started receiving good reviews in *Down Beat* where he had previously received little attention.

1958

Trane began his second association with Miles Davis. This association lasted a little more than two years. The album *Milestones*, recorded in April, was the first record to emerge from the second Coltrane-Davis collaboration. It is perhaps one of the greatest jazz albums ever created.

1959

Coltrane is on the legendary jazz album from Miles Davis *Kind of Blue*. Modern “cool” jazz rising in popularity. Dave Brubeck, the Modern Jazz Quartet. Period from April through December 1959 was filled with original music from Trane. Landmark albums of this time were *Giant Steps* and *Coltrane Jazz*.

The Coltrane family was living in a small house in the Queens section of New York. Trane was completely possessed by music and carried his sax around his neck everywhere he went. Strewn about his house were all types of books on many diverse subjects. His friend Sonny Rollins recommended *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Bill Evans had recommended Krishnamurti's *Commentaries on Living*.

1960

Coltrane left Miles Davis in April 1960 and from then on led his own group for an appearance at the Jazz Gallery in NYC. He performed with various musicians but soon settled on McCoy Tyner on piano and Elvin Jones on drums. The bass chair changed around — Reggie Workman played for most of 1961, sometimes in tandem with Art Davis — before finally going to Jimmy Garrison at the end of 1961. He had moved through a number of different personnel including Steve Kuhn, Pete La Roca and Billy Higgins. The lineup stabilized in the fall with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Steve Davis and drummer Elvin Jones.

Tyner was an old friend from Philadelphia and had an understanding that the pianist would join Coltrane when Tyner felt ready for the exposure of regularly working with him.

Coltrane had purchased a soprano saxophone around February 1, 1959, and began using it regularly in May 1960. His recording of "My Favorite Things" that October (issued in March 1961) re-established the soprano, which had rarely been used in modern jazz, as a favored instrument.

The tracks recorded in October 1960, eventually became three albums: *My Favorite Things*, issued in March 1961, *Coltrane Plays the Blues*, issued in 1962, and *Coltrane's Sound*, issued in 1964. "My Favorite Things" is a catchy waltz from Rodgers and Hammerstein's hit musical *The Sound of Music*. This track features Coltrane playing the soprano saxophone, and became a hit single in its own right. His work on soprano brought the semi-obscure instrument into mainstream jazz, where it remains to this day. It became one of his best-selling pieces ever. Coltrane suddenly won a large audience outside the jazz world that didn't know much about him. He was suddenly known to a much larger audience than ever before. Far outside the confines of the New York and Philadelphia clubs he played in at the time.

"Asked by a Swedish disc jockey in 1960 if he was trying to "play what you hear," he said that he was working off set harmonic devices while experimenting with others of which he was not yet certain. Although he was trying to "get the one essential . . . the one single line," he felt forced to play everything, for he was unable to "work what I know down into a more lyrical line" that would be "easily understood." Coltrane never found the one line. Nor was he ever to achieve the "more beautiful . . . more lyrical" sound he aspired to. He complicated rather than simplified his art, making it more visceral, raw, and wild. And even to his greatest fans it was anything but easily understood. In this failure, however, Coltrane contributed far more than he could have in success, for above all, his legacy to his followers is the abiding sense of search, of the musical quest as its own fulfillment."

"What Coltrane Wanted"
The Atlantic
December 1987
Edward Strickland

1961

Oliver Nelson album *Blues and the Abstract Truth*. The song "Stolen Moments" was recorded at this time. While Trane was not on the album, many former and future Trane alumni like Eric Dolphy, Paul Chambers, Bill Evans and Roy Haynes. Begins recording for the Impulse label and first record with them was *Africa Brass*, then *Ole Coltrane* and

Coltrane Live At the Village Vanguard. The Vanguard date was the first live recording for Coltrane.

He was becoming increasingly popular: *Down Beat* honored him as “jazzman of the year” in its review of the year 1961. He won the magazine’s critic and reader polls that year for best tenor saxophonist and for miscellaneous instrument (soprano saxophone); the critics also voted his group the “new star” combo. But his detractors grew louder with the addition of Eric Dolphy to the group for most of 1961. English critics lambasted him on his European tour that November, while *Down Beat*’s John Tynan wrote of “a horrifying . . . anti-jazz trend.” Ira Gitler called his music “monotonous, a treadmill to the Kingdom of Boredom.” Despite the negative sentiment expressed by critics, it was hard to argue with the emotional power of Coltrane’s music. *Down Beat* critic Pete Welding described his playing on tracks such as “Chasin the Trane” as torrential and anguished outpouring, delivered with unmistakable power, conviction, and near-demonic ferocity and as such is a remarkable human document.

For some years Coltrane had been exploring the music of other cultures — India, parts of Africa, Latin America. He arranged to meet the master sitar player Ravi Shankar in New York in December 1961 for the first of a handful of informal lessons, and named his son after him. It wasn’t only the sound of world music that attracted John Coltrane; he was interested in all kinds of religion, and in astrology, numerology, and mysticism.

1962

Years from 1962 to 1965 have been regarded as the key years of the classic Coltrane Quartet.

The year began with Coltrane pianist McCoy Tyner’s *Inception*, the pianist’s first proper release as bandleader, with the sessions for Impulse! taking place at Rudy Van Gelder’s studio on January 10 and 11, 1962. It features performances by Tyner with Art Davis and Elvin Jones. Of the set’s six tracks, four are Tyner compositions, with “Effendi” becoming something of a modern jazz standard and embraced, most notably, by pianist Ahmad Jamal.

The album *Coltrane* (recorded from April to September of the year) is one of the best single albums he would ever record. Allmusic’s Michael G. Nastos says, “Even more than any platitudes one can heap on this extraordinary recording, it historically falls between the albums *Ole* and *Impressions* - completing a triad of studio efforts that are as definitive as anything Coltrane ever produced, and highly representative of him in his prime.”

The tune “Up ‘Gainst the Wall” is one of a beautiful, light and cheerful piece. A swinging blues, up-tempo piece. There is none of the later brooding of Coltrane in it. A piece close to what rock saxophone would later play in the 70s and 80s. Very accessible to the new listener to Coltrane and perhaps one of the best entry points to his music. And, at only

three minutes and fourteen seconds it is certainly one of the shortest pieces Trane ever recorded.

The tune “Big Nick” is presented in a playful way. The image of someone, like a Pied Piper type archetype in front of you, begging you on. Like the ancient Sirens threw Sinbad off his course. Trane comes in at a minute and half into the piece in a powerful solo on his alto soprano horn of “My Favorite Things.” It is perhaps the first full arrival of the Coltrane sound and it is heard on this important 1962 piece from an incredibly creative time in Coltrane’s life.

Already the power of the famous Quartet is evident (and even perhaps, for some, in full bloom) on the exploding outward “Miles’ Mode.” In direct contrast to the playful and cheerful pieces, this piece is one of exploring outward. There is not the cheerfulness in this tune that a place has been discovered and one is happy life “Up ‘Gainst The Wall” and “Big Nick.” This music is searching outward.

Listen to the piano of McCoy Tyner on this. His solo foreshadows so much from the young pianist from Philadelphia and had known Trane for so many years. Coltrane lets McCoy show his talents and brilliance. This is perhaps one of the first greatest “breakout” performances of McCoy Tyner on record. I’m listening to it now, as I write this. It foreshadows much ahead for the brilliant pianist who was so close in spirit to Coltrane.

At around five minutes and forty seconds into the piece, Jimmy Garrison is featured on bass with just Elvin on high top cymbals backing him up. Trane and Tyner return about a minute later in the piece. It is perhaps the best introduction I know of to this period of Coltrane. It says it all here. The exploration and the pushing limits of music. Trane’s horn almost like a human voice at times, screaming out to the world. The universe.

The piece “Tuji” also has the era of exploration for a particular place rather than claiming a particular place in the world as the first few pieces above suggest. Elvin Jones keeps a deep rhythm in the background while Trane states the theme. Tyner hitting just one chord over and over. For staying in one key and chord it is amazing. Tyner comes in at three minutes with another solo that will define his later style and brilliance in jazz. Jimmy Garrison takes a solo at around four minutes and forty seconds into the piece. Another brilliant piece from Jimmy. Trane comes in at the very end to finish the piece. The mode of the piece is a direct reference to what Trane learned from Miles when he played with him.

The “Inchworm” is a beautifully exploratory piece. It shows Coltrane wasn’t above fishing for another modal, three-quarter-time novelty hit. It is another searching, exploratory piece. But it the searching is combined with the cheerfulness and happiness and spirit as on “Big Nick” and “Up ‘Gainst The Wall.” Again, the powerful saxophone of Trane. The same sound heard so much on his favorite piece he ever recorded, “My

Favorite Things.” A distinctly eastern sound to the horn. That of a snake charmer is one way of describing it.

The particular piece is perhaps where the entire quartet reached out to eastern sounds with their music. Where Trane acknowledged his devotion to the music. His wife was a Moslem and Trane had studied much of the Muslim faith and the origin of their music in the Middle East. For, with Trane, it is fair to say that by this time he was programming in (channeling?) some of the most important music of the Middle East.

He really puts his artistic “flag” in the ground with “Inchworm” declaring that he is creating a new type of jazz that one could easily term spiritual jazz. The blues had the heart for its subject. It was a music about being heartbroken. (“I had a blue Monday when my baby left town ...”). Something just growing called rock was in the background at the time. About the heartbreaks of that new class called teenagers. The dating problems. Dances and things like that.

But “Inchworm” is predecessor to a link that many new rock stars found in the music of Coltrane. Like the Byrds song “Eight Miles High” that directly references to this particular style of Coltrane. The Beatles turn to the east. Modern rock bands like U2.

The conclusion that one draws from this is that a jazz one might term spiritual jazz is Coltrane’s great legacy to the world. But was it simply spiritual jazz and those who love this type of music? Or, was it to many people in the world who have heard the music of John Coltrane? And have received something from him more than just the music from his horn? A new type of religion perhaps? Like the Coltrane Church in San Francisco? But perhaps a religion not defined by that old standard of the embodiment of a church but rather by a feeling for the music of one person. A feeling for the music of Coltrane. This album is such an excellent exposure to his music at time. An honest spectrum of his musical output. From his soft, reflective ballads to his searching, exploratory music. It is all in this particular album. The quartet is still in its infancy. The music of Trane has not evolved into his later far out materials... yet.

The piece “Soul Eyes” on the Coltrane album is a slow, tempo, ballad. This shows the so-called “gentle side of John Coltrane” that seemed a better PR way to present Coltrane to the public. But it also served as a genuine rest period for Coltrane who had been rushing so much in the past years. A time for reflection at the beginning years of his famous Coltrane Quartet. More than perhaps any other piece, this captures this reflection in the middle of a growing hurricane of music power.

The final piece on the album, “Out of This World” offers a powerful Coltrane sound right from the start backed up by the rhythm of Garrison and Jones. Soon, joined by Tyner. At over fourteen minutes in length, it resembles a number of the other pieces of great length on later albums from Trane. Another piece of exploration and searching. In great contrast

to “Soul Eyes” and it’s reflective mood. This piece announces that time for reflection is now over. Time for “pursuance” as Coltrane would later announce in one of his suites on *A Love Supreme*.

The 1962 Impulse record *Coltrane* is perhaps the best place for newcomers to gather. His sound has matured from where it’s been and suggests where it is going. The quartet is tight and working together before Trane went off on a new direction the quartet members couldn’t understand and would all leave him in three years. But here, on this album, there is that joy of discovering the talents of the others in a powerful jazz group.

Coltrane works with Duke Ellington to records *Duke Ellington & John Coltrane* on September 26, 1962. It is released in February 1963 on Impulse.

In November, Coltrane embarked on an ambitious European tour with the classic quartet.

1963

Along the same lines, in November of 1962 Coltrane recorded most of the tracks for his *Ballads* album and in March 1963, he recorded tracks such as ‘Lush Life’ with vocalist Johnny Hartman. As hoped, these albums succeed in winning over many of Coltrane’s critics.

It was later termed his “soft” and “gentle” period or side. For PR purposes, Coltrane was in need of a “soft” and “gentle” period after the fire of the first few years of the Coltrane Quartet. Things had first exploded at the Village Vanguard in 1961. And the movement of Coltrane towards eastern sounds evidenced on “My Favorite Things” offered a new direction for, not only Coltrane, but American jazz in general.

The ballads period offered a time to slow down for Coltrane and reflect on the past, consolidate things learned, and set goals for the immediate future. For the next year would bring his most creative year ever with the creation of his signature piece of piece.

Coltrane leaves Naima for Alice McLeod in the summer.

Records the album *Impressions*. As critic Scott Yanow notes in AllMusic, “Impressions is is a hodgepodge of memorable Coltrane performances from the 1961-1963 period. ‘India’ and ‘Impressions’ are taken from Trane’s famous November 1961 engagement at the Village Vanguard; bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy is heard on the former while the latter features a marathon solo from Coltrane on tenor. Also included on this set are 1962’s ‘Up ‘Gainst the Wall’ and the classic of the album, 1963’s ‘After the Rain.’

Records *Live at Birdland* in October and November. Despite its title, only the first three tracks were recorded live at the club, the rest are studio tracks. Among the studio tracks is

“Alabama” a tribute to four children killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama on September 15.

“On a first encounter with Coltrane, one could never believe the enormity of the force with which he and his musicians played. There was no talking. No announcements. I never saw Coltrane count off a tempo. He looked around, maybe smiled at his drummer, then put his mouth to his horn. What the saxophonist and his musicians did next was beyond material and beyond logic. With his band working under him, behind him, or encircling his sound, Coltrane would rock and roll like a rhythm-and-blues player as he pushed his saxophone forward and drew it back to him, sometimes going down on one knee. To the unprepared, the music might have sounded overstated, undisciplined, and hysterical, but it was not to become that until near the end, when the great quartet was broken up by Coltrane's naive submission to actual noise and incompetence.”

Stanley Crouch
“John Coltrane’s Finest Hour”
Slate
March 10, 2006

1964

The album *Crescent* was recorded on April 27 and June 1 and shows Coltrane’s meditative side serving as a prelude to his immortal work a few months later *A Love Supreme*. All original Coltrane tunes. It is regarded by many as the Coltrane’s darkest album. Only the brief, infectious medium-up “Bessie's Blues,” and a samba-tinged groove in the midsection of the otherwise sedate “Wise One,” break the somber mood. Critic Francis Davis notes, “Simultaneously a ballad album, a darkly ruminative suite, and a subtle exercise in reconfiguring Latin rhythms into a rubato three-against-four (though not billed as any of those things), this has been a favorite of conservatives from Martin Williams to Wynton Marsalis, who regard it as Coltrane's quartet peak. (Francis Davis, “The Coltrane Guide,” *The Village Voice*, 5/30/06)

Records *Live at Birdland*.

The signature album of Coltrane *A Love Supreme* recorded on the evening of December 9 at Rudy Van Gelder’s studio. Van Gelder did something he hardly ever did: he dimmed the lights in the studio to give atmosphere to the event. The recording was named Album of the Year in *Down Beat* and became Coltrane’s best selling album. Coltrane’s spiritual outlook influenced much of his composing and playing in the remainder of his life. The liner notes on the album talk of a “spiritual awakening” in 1957 when he was able to kick drugs. The album is a suite divided into four sections: the first titled “Acknowledgement” the second “Resolution.” the third “Pursuance” and the last “Psalm.” Many critics

observe this progression represents the progress of his life and music after his “awakening” in 1957.

In 1964, Coltrane moved from Queens, New York to a brick ranch house on a 3 1/2 acre wooded lot in the quiet suburb of Dix Hills. This bucolic setting - 40 miles east of the city - is perhaps the last place you'd expect to find a musician creating the virtuosic jazz that Coltrane is famous for.

1965

In 1965 Coltrane married Alice McLeod in Juarez, Mexico. John Coltrane became stepfather to Alice's daughter Michele and the couple had three children: John Jr. (1964–1982), a drummer; Oranyan (b. 1967), a DJ who played saxophone with Santana for a period of time; and Ravi (b. 1965), a saxophonist.

Trane continues to ignite controversy because of his involvement in the so-called avant-garde. He regularly let younger players sit in with his group. In June 1965, he gathered ten musicians together for a recording session that produced the landmark album *Ascension*. As critic Francis Davis notes, “Whenever people talk of Coltrane going off the deep end after *A Love Supreme*, this squalling tribal gathering organized around raw energy and a handful of chords is inevitably offered as Exhibit A. An artifact in which only the most intrepid will take pleasure, it's nevertheless essential for providing evidence of how Coltrane helped shaped the '60s avant-garde and how its rank and file reshaped him.” (Francis Davis, “The Coltrane Guide,” *The Village Voice*, 5/30/06)

By September, tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders was a regular member of the group, and Coltrane soon also hired Rashied Ali as a second drummer. Uncomfortable with Coltrane's new style, Tyner and Jones left shortly after that, and Alice McLeod Coltrane became the group's new pianist.

His music had become increasingly abstract and dissonant, with greater use of multiphonics, overblowing, and the altissimo register of high notes above the saxophone's natural range. In November, they recorded *Meditations*, featuring the two drummers playing simultaneously on tracks such as “Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” At the end of the year, Tyner left Coltrane and was replaced by Alice McCleod.

According to Jim McGuinn of the Byrds, while touring in late 1965, the Byrds had only a single cassette recording to listen to on the tour bus, with Ravi Shankar on one side and Coltrane's *Impressions* and Africa Brass on the other. “We played that damn thing 50 or 100 times, through a Fender amplifier that was plugged into an alternator in the car.” The result was the recording of the celebrated single “Eight Miles High” acknowledged by the band as a direct homage to Coltrane, and to “India” on *Impressions* in particular.

1966

Releases *Kulu Se Mama* and *Meditations*. Coltrane continued to record in an increasingly abstract style, with two live albums that year, *Live in Japan* and *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison leave the Coltrane group in 1966. Jones left at the end of January 1966. Jones told critic Whitney Balliet that “There was too much going on, and it was ridiculous as far as I was concerned.”

At the end of 1966, he recorded at Temple University and the album (issued in 2104) is *Offering: Live At Temple University* documents a legendary concert by Trane at Temple University in his hometown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 11, 1966, six weeks after his fortieth birthday and nine months before his untimely death. Operating at equivalent levels of invention and energy are three members of his working quintet of one year's standing his wife, Alice Coltrane, on piano; Pharoah Sanders on reeds and flute; and Rashied Ali on drums.

“But the audience at Temple University wasn’t going to give Coltrane a home town hero’s welcome. Even before the first number was finished, audience members started walking out. Others “looked as though they wanted to leave but sat rigid with disbelief,” according to jazz critic Francis Davis, who was in attendance that evening. The recording leaves us in no doubt as to the reason for this response. Even by Coltrane’s standards, this music was transgressive and disturbing. At a now famous moment during the concert, Coltrane even put aside his saxophone to sing and pound on his chest—almost as if he had exhausted everything the horn could do, and needed to return to that most primal musical instrument of them all, the human body... At Temple, Coltrane no longer operated as a jazz artist improvising melodies, but more like a mystic on a vision quest.”

The Daily Beast

“What If Jazz Giant John Coltrane Had Lived?”

Ted Gioia

9/14/14

1967

By the spring of 1967 his health was failing rapidly. On April 23, he appeared at the Olatunji Center in Harlem (available on *The Olatunji Concert: The Last Live Recording* - Impulse CD 314 589 120-2). His final performance was in Baltimore on May 7. He died of liver cancer in Huntington Hospital on Long Island July 17, 1967. His death was unexpected, it was shocking, and in a very real sense the jazz world never fully recovered from the loss.

Coltrane’s late style can also be heard on tracks such as “Mars from the album *Interstellar Space*, and *Stellar Regions*, both recorded in 1967. The album *Expression* was finalized just one day before his death.

Many mourned his death but few could really understand where his music had taken him. He seemed to be getting farther and farther out in the final year of his music. The English poet Philip Larkin perhaps expressed it well. "I regret Coltrane's death, as I regret the death of any man," he said in 1967. "But I can't conceal the fact that it leaves in jazz a vast, blessed silence."

Larkin became convinced that everything that had gone wrong with jazz reached its grim apotheosis with Coltrane, who offered "squeals, squeaks, Bronx cheers and throttled slate-pencil noises for serious consideration." Collecting his jazz reviews in 1970, Larkin asserted that "it was with Coltrane that jazz started to be ugly on purpose." (By Pankaj Mishra, "Favorite Things" *NY Times*, October 28, 2007)

Even Rashied Ali lamented that Coltrane "exhausted the saxophone" in the strange screaming sounds Coltrane made during his final recordings.

McCoy Tyner releases *The Real McCoy* and *Tender Moments*.

1968

Tyner releases *Time for Tyner* and *Expansions*.

1969

In A Silent Way from Miles Davis. Perhaps the most powerful answer to questions many were asking as to where jazz going after Trane's death. The piece "In A Silent Way" is perhaps one of the most powerful pieces of music created in modern times. Listen to the 19:53 minute version from the "Original Mix" of 1969. Easily obtainable on iTunes. More than any other piece of music, this particular piece by Miles Davis seems to offer up a bridge from the jazz of the 60s into a new direction. There is the continual drone sound in the background. A beautiful expression of the entire late 60s era. Going into a new decade that seemed so scary to so many.

Interesting, but not surprising, *In A Silent Way* was recorded in February 1969 just 6 months before another legendary Miles Davis album *Bitches Brew*. The piece "Peace" off *In A Silent Way* could easily go with a track from *Bitches Brew*. With *Bitches Brew* Davis' electronic music tentacles extend outward to create a new type of electronic jazz with bands like *Weather Report* and *Return to Forever*. Much of this new music direct descendants from *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*.

With these two albums, Miles Davis puts a large part of jazz into a new electronic direction. Yet it is a beautifully contemplative, direction. The music of the piece

“Peaceful” flows in over the world like some great trance-like fog. So many leaders of the new world of jazz on this date. Corea. Hancock. Zawinul. McLaughlin.

This music is so referential to *Bitches Brew* that would follow by in a few months. It could easily be a track on *Bitches Brew*. This is the first time that the new direction of Miles is really stated. One might term it an electronic direction but the truth is, I don’t think any critic has ever been able to adequately define this new period in the career of Miles Davis. It did turn jazz on its ear and create legendary groups like Weather Report and Return to Forever.

1970

McCoy Tyner resists being put into anyone else’s music. He avoids the direction of Herbie Hancock and others. What music would come from Tyner? He releases *Extensions*. No electronics on this piece. Another direction in modern jazz. An alternative to the electronic influx into jazz from the influence of Miles? Yet more a type of return to that particular spiritual essence found in only one other person: John Coltrane.

Has McCoy Tyner become the “disciple” of the “prophet” John Coltrane? Many others certainly honored the voice of Trane. But only a few (perhaps only one) chosen to carry on this voice. Perhaps Tyner is the one? Along with Alice Coltrane?

His recordings with the Milestone label over the next six years show the presence of Coltrane more than any other source except for the music of Alice Coltrane. Tyner’s major producer during this period? The venerable Orrin Keepnews the legendary jazz producer. First producing Monk on the Riverside label in the 50s.

1972

Tyner moves to the Milestone label and records *Sahara* (a Grammy Award winner). Also releases *Song for my Lady* and *Echoes of a Friend*.

1973

Tyner records *Enlightenment* and *Song of the New World*.

1974

Tyner releases *Sama Layuca* and *Atlantis*.

1975

The album *Trident* with “Impressions” recorded by McCoy Tyner at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley.

Tyner records *Trident*.

1976

Tyner records *Fly With the Wind* and *Focal Point*.

1978

Tyner’s *Inner Voices* album released. Also releases *Passion Dance*.

Notes

1979 – Present

Always continue to listen to Tyner. But I think the power of his commitment to the music of Coltrane is contained within his 72 to 78 recordings. Becoming familiar with Tyner’s albums from these years, one becomes familiar with the modern voice of John Coltrane. Mixed with the voice of the brilliant pianist of a new type of jazz.

Coltrane Narrative Biography
(Excerpted from: *John Coltrane Legacy*
By Lewis Porter - August 2001)

John William Coltrane, Jr., was born in Hamlet, North Carolina, on September 23, 1926. Shortly after his birth, his parents joined his mother's family in High Point, where he was raised. Coltrane probably received his first instrumental training in the fall of 1939; he played alto horn, then clarinet, and then alto saxophone in community and high school bands.

Meanwhile, between 1938 and 1940 the family was devastated by the deaths of five members, including John's father. After his graduation from high school in 1943, John moved to Philadelphia, where his mother, his aunt, and his cousin Mary eventually joined him. While working day jobs, he studied music, inspired by two alto saxophonists — first Johnny Hodges, then Charlie Parker. In 1944, he enrolled at the Ornstein School of Music and began private saxophone lessons and classes in music theory. By 1945, he had joined the Philadelphia musicians union, and was playing gigs around town.

In July of 1945, Coltrane and his friend Benny Golson, who also played saxophone, went to hear Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker play at Philadelphia's Academy of Music. Coltrane said, "The first time I heard Bird play, it hit me right between the eyes." While he had first modeled his playing on Young's, and then that of alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges, after the concert Coltrane began to emulate Parker, and set his sights on mastering the alto saxophone.

Coltrane served as a seaman and musician in the navy from August 1945 until August 1946. On his return to Philadelphia, he began studying music at the Granoff Studios, with the financial support of the G.I. Bill. This period of study helped Coltrane develop a solid foundation in the fundamentals of western art music, music theory and ear training. These elements ultimately played a key role in the development of his approaches to both composition and improvisation. He also free-lanced around Philadelphia, often with saxophonist Jimmy Heath's big band; and toured with other bands. He began to play tenor saxophone professionally in late 1948 with the blues singer and saxophonist Eddie Vinson. He played with Dizzy Gillespie from 1949 to 1951 and with the saxophone virtuoso Earl Bostic in 1952, and in 1954 he joined his early idol Johnny Hodges. However, Hodges had to let him go as Trane was strung out on heroin.

In late September 1955, he was working in Philadelphia with organist Jimmy Smith when he was "discovered" by Miles Davis. Coltrane began to record prolifically with Davis and others. Reviewers mostly praised him, though often with reservations, while a minority violently

dismissed his work. In either case, it was clear that he had developed a distinctive style. But, like many of his generation, Coltrane had developed addictions that interfered with his performance. After Davis fired him at the end of April 1957 because of his unreliability, he rid himself of heroin by quitting "cold turkey" during a week gigging in Philadelphia.

He immediately began a crucial association with Thelonious Monk, who asked Coltrane to join his group at the Five Spot in Manhattan from July through the end of 1957. The engagement was a turning point for both of them — Coltrane's playing drew raves from most. Afterward, in early January 1958, Davis rehired Coltrane.

During the spring of 1959, Coltrane appeared on two of the most famous jazz albums ever made, representing two very different approaches: Davis's *Kind of Blue* and his own *Giant Steps*. The former was an attempt to strip the backgrounds behind the soloists, the bases for their improvisations, down to the most bare, uncluttered scales. The latter was an essay in the most difficult and challenging backgrounds possible.

Coltrane left Davis in April 1960 and from then on led his own group. He performed with various musicians but soon settled on McCoy Tyner on piano and Elvin Jones on drums. The bass chair changed around — Reggie Workman played for most of 1961, sometimes in tandem with Art Davis — before finally going to Jimmy Garrison at the end of 1961.

Coltrane had purchased a soprano saxophone around February 1, 1959, and began using it regularly in May 1960. His recording of "My Favorite Things" that October (issued in March 1961) re-established the soprano, which had rarely been used in modern jazz, as a favored instrument.

He was becoming increasingly popular: *Down Beat* honored him as "jazzman of the year" in its review of the year 1961. He won the magazine's critic and reader polls that year for best tenor saxophonist and for miscellaneous instrument (soprano saxophone); the critics also voted his group the "new star" combo. But his detractors grew louder with the addition of Eric Dolphy to the group for most of 1961. English critics lambasted him on his European tour that November, while *Down Beat*'s John Tynan wrote of "a horrifying . . . anti-jazz trend." After Dolphy left, Coltrane's best-known quartet — with Tyner, Garrison, and Jones — remained intact from April 1962 through the fall of 1965, except for some periods when Jones was absent.

For some years Coltrane had been exploring the music of other cultures — India, parts of Africa, Latin America. He arranged to meet the master sitar player Ravi Shankar in New York in December 1961 for the first of a handful of informal lessons, and named his son after him. It wasn't only the sound of world music that attracted John Coltrane; he was interested in all kinds of religion, and in astrology, numerology, and mysticism. His mystical, spiritual interests are explicit in *A Love Supreme*, his best-known album and still his best-selling one as well. It was voted album of the year by both *Down Beat* and *Jazz* magazine in 1965.

But he continued to ignite controversy because of his involvement in the so-called avant garde. He regularly let younger players sit in with his group. In June 1965, he gathered ten musicians together for a recording session that produced the landmark album *Ascension*. By September, tenor saxophonist Pharaoh Sanders was a regular member of the group, and Coltrane soon also hired Rashied Ali as a second drummer. Uncomfortable with Coltrane's new style, Tyner and Jones left shortly after that, and Alice McLeod Coltrane became the group's new pianist.

John Coltrane had met Alice McLeod in July 1963. His marriage to Naima was then on the rocks, and he and Alice were soon living together. That fall, Coltrane began to cut back on touring and made plans to stay around New York, mostly for family reasons. (He was not yet aware of any serious illness.) He had begun to take control of his own business affairs, forming his own label imprint and planning some self-produced concerts. He spoke of opening a space where rehearsals and performances would be open informally to the public.

But by the spring of 1967 his health was failing rapidly. On April 23, he appeared at the Olatunji Center in Harlem (available on *The Olatunji Concert: The Last Live Recording* Impulse CD 314 589 120-2). His final performance was in Baltimore on May 7. He died of liver cancer in Huntington Hospital on July 17, 1967. His death was unexpected, it was shocking, and in a very real sense the jazz world never fully recovered from the loss.

What happened to the music he created after his death?

Was there a key disciple who has carried on the music?

Coltrane Quotes

“My music is the spiritual expression of what I am — my faith, my knowledge, my being...When you begin to see the possibilities of music, you desire to do something really good for people, to help humanity free itself from its hang-ups...I want to speak to their souls.”

— John Coltrane

“I start in the middle of a sentence and move both directions at once.”

— John Coltrane

“My goal is to live the truly religious life, and express it in my music. If you live it, when you play there's no problem because the music is part of the whole thing. To be a musician is really something. It goes very, very deep. My music is the spiritual expression of what I am - my faith, my knowledge, my being.”

— John Coltrane

“I would like to bring to people something like happiness. I would like to discover a method so that if I want it to rain, it will start right away to rain. If one of my friends is ill, I'd like to play a certain song and he will be cured; when he'd be broke, I'd bring out a different song and immediately he'd receive all the money he needed.”

— John Coltrane

“After all the investigation, all of the technique-doesn't matter! Only if the feeling is right.”

— John Coltrane

“You can play a shoestring if you're sincere”

— John Coltrane

“Lots of people imagine wrongly that 'My Favorite Things' is one of my compositions; I would have loved to have written it, but it's by Rodgers and Hammerstein.”

— John Coltrane

“Favorite Things' is my favorite piece of all those I have recorded.”

— John Coltrane

“All a musician can do is to get closer to the sources of nature, and so feel that he is in communion with the natural laws.”

-- John Coltrane

“Over all, I think the main thing a musician would like to do is give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things that he knows of and senses in the universe . . . That’s what I would like to do. I think that’s one of the greatest things you can do in life and we all try to do it in some way. The musician’s is through his music.”

-- John Coltrane

“Sometimes I wish I could walk up to my music for the first time, as if I had never heard it before. Being so inescapably a part of it, I’ll never know what the listener gets, what the listener feels, and that’s too bad.”

-- John Coltrane

“Working with Monk brought me close to a musical architect of the highest order. I felt I learned from him in every way--through the senses, theoretically, technically. I would talk to Monk about musical problems, and he would sit at the piano and show me the answers just by playing them. I could watch him play and find out the things I wanted to know. Also, I could see a lot of things that I didn't know about at all.”

-- John Coltrane, *Downbeat* (1960)

“Working with Monk is like falling down a dark elevator shaft”

-- John Coltrane, *Downbeat* (1960)

Quotes By Others About Coltrane

"You know, John Coltrane has been sort of a god to me. Seems like, in a way, he didn't get the inspiration out of other musicians. He had it. When you hear a cat do a thing like that, you got to go along with him. I think I heard Coltrane before I really got close to Miles [Davis]. Miles had a tricky way of playing his horn that I didn't understand as much as I did Coltrane. I really didn't understand what Coltrane was doing, but it was so exciting the thing that he was doing..."

-- Wes Montgomery interview in: *Downbeat* (1961).

"In short, [Coltrane's] tone is beautiful because it is functional. In other words, it is always involved in saying something. You can't separate the means that a man uses to say something from what he ultimately says. Technique is not separated from its content in a great artist."

-- Cecil Taylor

"John [Coltrane] was like a visitor to this planet. He came in peace and he left in peace; but during his time here, he kept trying to reach new levels of awareness, of peace, of spirituality. That's why I regard the music he played as spiritual music -- John's way of getting closer and closer to the Creator."

-- Albert Ayler

Music Licensing Jowcol Music

Jowcol Music is the publishing company established over 40 years ago by John Coltrane. It secures clearance for licenses of all Coltrane recordings, inclusive of compositions by Alice Coltrane. Today, their son, Ravi Coltrane registers his recorded music under the Jowcol name. Jowcol is affiliated with BMI.

The purpose of Jowcol is to maintain control and responsibility for the numerous compositions of John Coltrane that are reissued worldwide and released for use in the various media. His music can be heard through broadcast, television, film, and video; also, in the various recent forms as CD, DVD, and the latest technological works as hologram in film.

The complete discography of John Coltrane's music is available for review. Also, MCA-Universal, Atlantic Records, Fantasy Records, Verve and other leading record companies have Coltrane recordings on their roster. Licenses have been issued to such artist as: Branford Marsalis, Manhattan Transfer, Chaka Khan, Mongo Santamaria, Tito Puente, Lionel Hampton, Chick Corea, George Benson, Gil Scott Heron, Black Poets and other leading musicians. Company executives obtaining licenses include: Bill Cosby, Bill Gates, Spike Lee, Ralph Gleason, Bill Konierez, Cameron Crowe and others.

The Jowcol catalog is highly valued on several continents. Its international interests are expanding. More and More countries throughout Europe, the Middle East, Asian Pacific region, South America, the continent of Africa, and eastern block nations are now provided with the availability for consumer purchase of Coltrane music. Globally, Japan is one of the leading revenue earners.

In America, it was noted that younger audiences that never attended live performance of John Coltrane, are showing a great interest in his music. Also, contracts for merchandising are extensive to the degree that approval may be given to other publishers to reproduce John's music in band arrangements, compositions in the concert key, and scholastic books with a cassette or CD for students to practice interactive. Gift merchandise is available through the Foundation; however, certain merchandising companies have obtained licenses from Jowcol to market Coltrane products.

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Artists, music managers, record company executives, and publishers require mechanical licenses for use of music. Licenses can be issued for a photo, poster or likeness shown in a filmed sequence. Also, clearance is required for the mention of John Coltrane name in any commercial media.

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SHUKAT ARROW HAFER WEBER & HERBSMAN, L.L.P.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
111 WEST 57TH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10019
212-245-4580
Attention Peter Shukat
info@musiclaw.com

Our Accountant:

Jowcol, LLC
c/o Gurse, Schneider & Co. LLP
1888 Century Park East, Suite 900
Los Angeles, CA 90067-1735
Attn: Roseanna Purczycki
310-5520960

Discography

1956 Two Tenors Prestige
 1956 Tenor Conclave Original Jazz
 1956 Mating Call Prestige
 1956 John Coltrane and the Jazz Giants Fantasy
 1957 Interplay for 2 Trumpets and 2 Tenors Original Jazz
 1957 John Coltrane with Kenny Burrell Prestige
 1957 Cattin' with Coltrane and Quinichette Original Jazz
 1957 Coltrane [Prestige] Original Jazz
 1957 Lush Life DCC
 1957 The Last Trane Original Jazz
 1957 John Coltrane with the Red Garland Trio Prestige
 1957 John Coltrane Prestige
 1957 Traning In Original Jazz
 1957 Blue Train Blue Note
 1957 The John Coltrane/Ray Draper Quintet Prestige
 1958 The Believer Prestige
 1958 Soultrane Original Jazz
 1958 Trane's Reign Prestige
 1958 Dial Africa Savoy
 1958 Gold Coast Savoy
 1958 Countdown: The Savoy Sessions Savoy
 1958 Africa: The Savoy Sessions Savoy
 1958 Settin' the Pace Original Jazz
 1959 Cannonball and Coltrane Polygram
 1959 Giant Steps Atlantic
 1960 The Avant-Garde Atlantic
 1960 Coltrane Plays the Blues Atlantic
 1960 Coltrane's Sound Atlantic
 1960 My Favorite Things [Atlantic] Atlantic
 1960 Coltrane Jazz Atlantic
 1961 Africa/Brass Impulse!
 1961 OLE Coltrane Atlantic
 1961 Live at the Village Vanguard Impulse!
 1961 Newport '63 [live] Impulse!
 1961 Impressions Impulse!
 1961 Ballads Impulse!
 1962 Coltrane [Impulse!] Impulse!
 1962 Bye Bye Blackbird Original Jazz
 1963 John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman Impulse!
 1963 To the Beat of a Different Drum Impulse!
 1963 Dear Old Stockholm Impulse!
 1963 Selflessness Impulse!

Emails

10/29/14

Michael,

Email to Lewis Porter, Professor of Music at Rutgers, author of *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*, the definitive biography on Trane. The definitive jazz biography period. He optioned his book five years to Hollywood but they couldn't do anything with it and has offered to come on board as a consultant if the Coltrane project ever gets off the ground and below is my email to him about some of my thoughts on a feature film about Trane. Have been outlining my book *Spirit Catcher* from 1950 on. I think that the goal is to select the 40 to 60 most powerful scenes from the book. Of course utilize Porter's book as well as Ben Ratliff's book in creating the screenplay. As well as screenwriting structure. But I don't think you can take a lot of these current screenplay writing "rules" to the old bank.

John

* * *

10/29/14

Lewis Porter
Rutgers University
Music Department

Lewis,

Makes me feel good that there is a possibility of you coming in as a consultant on the Coltrane film project. My little book *Spirit Catcher* on Trane is certainly nothing like yours. All it was really meant to be was a response to someone hearing Trane for the first time while living in Berkeley in the late 70s. I continue creating my outline on Trane's life and music starting in the early 50s. I see a feature film encompassing the years from 1950 to 1967 in Trane's life. Yet, the story continues on after Trane's death. Just as Trane was an apprentice and disciple of others, so McCoy Tyner forged a powerful path forward with the Blue Note and then Milestone labels.

I see the film continuing after Trane's death by showing the work of Tyner, an old friend and a

the true disciple of Trane. I found Trane's music through the music of McCoy Tyner and his *Inner Voices* of 1978. I went back through Tyner's work for Blue Note with *The Real McCoy*, *Tender Moments* *Time for Tyner* and *Expansions*. Then, his powerful albums for Milestone in the 70s, most under the production of jazz's Hall of Fame producer Orrin Keepnews. Most of the albums were recorded at the studios of the Fantasy Building in Berkeley. Fantasy had its own a music label and film studio producing films like *Amadeus* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. They had a state-of-the-art recording studio where Keepnews produced Tyner's greatest music.

In 1978, I was working for a large international corporation in San Francisco when I discovered Tyner's album *Inner Voices*. It was perhaps the most emotional music discovery of my life. Not only a new way of expression but the consummate artist. I worked my way back through Tyner's work at Milestone and then Blue Note and then with John Coltrane. A discovery of a particular album in 1978 led to my discovery of Trane. It was a life changing experience to know that there was a great spiritual presence in the music of one person.

So perhaps this is the way the story of Trane might be told. Not from someone who *knew* his music (at the time) but rather someone who *discovered* his music (later). I was unaware of Trane in the 60s. I discovered him in the 70s.

What is the story really about? About a prophet? Or about a disciple of a prophet?

The two clash in my mind. Maybe they are supposed to clash? Presenting a subtext of drama under the surface story.

One thing that a feature film has is anywhere from 40 to 60 scenes in it. One way of looking at a screenplay is by creating the 40-60 most powerful scenes within a period of someone's life. Of course the music he was creating at this time in the background.

I'm thinking of encompassing the years 1950 to 1967 as the general context of the Coltrane story and within this general time period, I'm thinking on focusing on 1957. My idea is that the various phases of Trane's life in these years might be divided into his years as an apprentice to others and his years as a leader and then a type of prophet of jazz. The various pieces (and progression) of the songs within *A Love Supreme* might also be used to make divisions in the story. At the same time, the years of Trane's disciple McCoy Tyner seem important to tell within the overall story of Trane. I feel that the story of Trane should not end with his death but within the life of someone who carries his music forward into the new world.

Trying to put together the 40 to 60 most powerful "scenes" for a screenplay (and then a film) on Trane's life is a daunting challenge to anyone wanting to carry his message on. But I certainly think that this is one of the key challenges of trying to express Trane in a feature film. The years you decide to focus on, the events and people and places and music in these years. This seems to be an important initial consideration.

Anyway, just good to know that there is a chance you would be interested as coming onboard this project as a consultant.

John

www.greathousestories.com

* * *

10/29/14

Hi John,

Of course I remember you. Maybe 10 years ago somebody bought rights to my Coltrane book in hopes of making a feature film. The last time I heard from him (maybe 5 years ago) he told me couldn't find a satisfactory screenwriter. Since then he allowed his option to expire, I believe, and the contact info that he and I were using no longer works.

There is still the occasional public television or BBC doc on Trane, but no feature film, which I believe is what you're talking about. So I'd say you are safe to work on one. If anything changes I'll let you know, of course.

All the best,

Lewis Porter

* * *

10/29/14

Yes, please keep me posted and I would be interested in being your consultant if this takes off.

THANKS JOHN

Lewis

* * *

10/31/14

Sounds good, John! You really have a vision for the film, and that is essential, for sure.

Keep me posted on your progress!

All the best,

Lewis

* * *

Hi John--In fact I don't know. Haven't heard anything about one. I wouldn't be surprised if there are several, though...

Hope all's well. Ben.

NOTES

As the ultimate iconic figure in jazz history, Coltrane's story follows a familiar heroic narrative. A rising talent succumbs to temptation, suffering tragedy before overcoming his personal weakness and reaching unparalleled heights.

* * *

I discover this album (the "I" seems to really be the narrator of the overall story) who knew little about Trane in the 60s. Because of this, it offered a great discovery for him in the 70s.

I get involved in jazz. Once again after hearing the music of my father's love for big bands. I got involved with the rally to save a radio station KRE in Berkeley. The buyout from Inner City Broadcasting and the arrival of the "cool storm" programming format. I was publishing something called the *Jazz Newsletter*. Was involved in helping promote Loft Jazz in the Bay Area. I produced some live jazz in Berkeley at Larry Blakes with the Andrei Kitaev trio. I started hanging out with people at KRE radio in Berkeley. The avant-garde station in Bay Area jazz at the time. The late night broadcast of Tyner a few weeks before Inner City takes over.

* * *

There is a need to re-read Lewis Porter and Ben Ratliff. Forget the others. Just these two. The leading Coltrane scholars in the nation. As well as the book *Coltrane on Coltrane* containing quotes from Trane. Read the book *Love Supreme* by Ashley Kahn, about the making of the album. And, reading much of the jazz criticism from the 50s and 60s describing the rise of Trane in the jazz and general press.

* * *

When I lived in Berkeley, KRE was an influential progressive jazz station that broadcast out of the Berkeley, California marina from approximately 1971 to 1980 (roughly), primarily mixing jazz fusion with the classics that preceded it, but also sprinkling a smattering of salsa, blues, reggae, funk, soul, and r&b into the flavorful stew. A favorite among musicians passing through the region, the station would additionally present live broadcasts of world-class musicians from Bay Area jazz clubs. On a (dependable) regular basis.

* * *

The story continues after Trane's death with the music of McCoy Tyner and then the move of the author of this story to the hills of the East Bay from the western part of San Francisco. Should the story start with Trane in the 1950s? Or, with the life of the author of the biography as he is writing it in Oakland, California in 1980. The book eventually published as *Spirit Catcher* wraps the biography of Trane in the context of the present world of the author in that it begins and ends in the present world.

The decision of the right narrative voice to tell the screen story of Coltrane is the most important literary (and perhaps dramatic) question in the entire endeavor. How does the author want readers to receive this story of this particular life? The first question is one of voice. Who should tell the story?

The first consideration is not towards character. But rather, voice. Who will the storyteller be? The individual? Or someone looking at the individual? Someone who's own story was involved with the subject he is writing about (Nick Carraway, *The Great Gatsby*). Or, someone who is not involved and stands back from the story and observes it from a high altitude perspective.

Perhaps it is told from various first person perspectives (like Faulkner's *Sound & Fury*). Or from mysterious narrators hovering above and in the past and future of the narrative as in the "Brown Stocking" section of Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*.

The voice needs to be determined first. But it is the most difficult to capture. The events of Trane's life are fairly well known. But how to show his life in the most dramatic way? This is the real story question with creating a screenplay on John Coltrane.

Where do you start the story? Where do you end it? The narrator makes this decision of course. But then, we always maintain that right to question whomever the narrator is posing as. Hiding from the crafty, detective-type, of reader.

* * *

Is the author's interest in Coltrane relevant to the story? Consider the below. Maybe the author's interest is not relevant?

1978

John Fraim starts *The Jazz Newsletter* and distributes it mainly around the SF Bay Area.

1980

John Fraim writes the biography of John Coltrane titled *Spirit Catcher: The Life And Art of John Coltrane*.

1995

Spirit Catcher is independently published by GreatHouse.

1997

Spirit Catcher wins the 1997 Small Press Book Awards in the Biography Category.

2004

Translinear Light is the last studio album released by Alice Coltrane. It was produced by her son, Ravi Coltrane, and released in 2004. All compositions by Alice Coltrane with the exception of 4 traditional compositions in addition to “Crescent” and “Leo” which were written by her late husband John Coltrane.

2014

Can a feature film be made about Coltrane’s life? What do others - like Tyner and Alice - add to knowledge about this particular life?

Sure, a TV series can be made to document the entire life of Trane. But what about one story that dramatizes his life more than anything else can? One central source that other stories might spring forth from one day. One particular time in his life. Down to weeks. Days. Hours. Maybe even seconds.

When you can spread out in a TV series there is less need to focus on that key dramatic question. With a feature films, there is a huge, desperate need. Yet feature films should always be looking for establishing the beginnings in a particular series.

They need to always be good stories but more. They need to be stories that start other stories.

In the late 60s, the John Coltrane Church started in San Francisco to carry on the message of John Coltrane. A Coltrane disciple named McCoy Tyner was beginning to create some of the most powerful jazz albums of modern times. All of this in retrospect of course from that control tower perspective of old age.

Perhaps as an answer to the electronic music of Miles Davis, that morphed into so many different groups of its time, Tyner always stayed with a real keyboard. Never using electronic keyboards.

In the end, what is the real story of Trane? How he took himself away from being a slave to drugs to a legendary musician? Or, how he turned from a hard bop musician into the lyrics and timing heard on pieces like the 1961 recording of “My Favorite Things.” Is his story to be measured by how far he travelled musically? Or how far he travelled in his freedom from drugs? Or, as a person?